

all these only serve as the sentimental explanation of the proposition, that

"'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all."

And this sentimental view of the subject is probably the only one which suggested itself to the poet. He knew by experience the Ossianic "joy of grief," and was aware that

"In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind,"

it is only the more delightful features of the subject which present themselves, shaded and softened by time, and perhaps hallowed and spiritualized by death. He therefore declared, and with the air of a discoverer, what had already been enunciated in all ages and in all languages—that it is better to have lost for ever a cherished enjoyment than never to have enjoyed at all.

But it seems to us that there is another and a larger view of the question, in which severe truth comes to the aid of sentiment.

Human life, as poetry tells us, is "a mingled yarn;" and therefore it must take its character from the predominant color. Yet we pity the man who has spent his fortune generously, and has been reduced to poverty in his old age; considering his lot as far harder than that of him who had never any fortune to lose. Why so? The latter has been in the gripe of poverty for threescore-years-and-ten—only exchanging it then for the gripe of death; while the former, after some sixty years of enjoyment, is suffered to escape with ten of misery. Surely in this instance our pity is on the wrong side. We may allege, in defence, that the fall would be the more distressing on account of the height; that the contrast between fulness and deprivation would add torture to the change: but this has already been shown to be an error. The fall would *at first* be severely felt, the individual would be stunned in proportion to the height from which he was precipitated; when, by and by, the consolatory principle we have alluded to would come into play: like Dogberry, he would begin to pride himself on his losses; and as time reconciled him to his new position, or at least made him more and more insensible to its hardships, the memory of his vanished greatness, like the mellowed illumination of the heavens after the sun has set, would throw an evening softness over his fortunes.

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